



FROM NEUTRAL TO NOTICED

Strategic Practice
Building for
ADR Professionals
with Susan Guthrie

Palm Beach County
Bar Association
ADR Committee
March 31, 2026

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Get the Materials

<https://susaneguthrie.com/PBCBA>



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How many of you think of yourselves as entrepreneurs as well as neutrals?

How many want to grow your mediation or ADR practice this year?

How many want more of the right cases, not just more cases?

How many have a clear strategy for becoming more visible to referral sources?

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Why Even Excellent Neutrals Struggle to Grow

First, They lack **clear positioning** and a **defined niche**

Second, they have not honed their **ideal case** and **referral base**.

Third, they **approach visibility reactively** instead of ***strategically***.

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The Strategic Mindset of a Successful Neutral

From *case taker* to *practice builder*



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THE SHIFT

- From waiting to be selected → to being the obvious choice
- From general availability → to intentional positioning
- From reactive growth → to strategic visibility



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If it is not clear when to use you,
you will not be used.

And that has nothing to do with
how good you are in the room.

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Clarifying Your Niche and Ideal Case

Define **where** you do your best work and **who** is most likely to bring it to you.



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Niche = Strength + Demand

Ask Yourself:

- **Where** do you do your best work?
- **What** kinds of matters are best suited to your skill set?
- **Who** is most likely to refer those matters?



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Where Most Neutrals Go Wrong Re: Niche

This is about:
What you do



Too broad to be memorable

Too vague to be referable

Too focused on credentials
instead of relevance

These are about lack of clarity in your practice focus

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The 4 Steps to What Actually Works

1. **Define** your *ideal case* in **concrete terms**
2. **Identify** the *attorneys and professionals* who handle those cases
3. **Describe** your value in *their language*
4. **Make** it **easy** to refer you



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Example: From Vague to Referable

BEFORE (what most neutrals say):

"I handle a wide range of civil and family matters and bring years of experience to every case."

AFTER:

"I focus on high conflict family cases involving complex financial issues, particularly where business valuation or hidden assets are in play. Most of my referrals come from family law attorneys handling high net worth divorces who need a neutral comfortable managing both emotional dynamics and financial complexity."

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Another Example

"I handle commercial disputes where the parties have an ongoing business relationship and want resolution without destroying future opportunities. Most of my cases come from business attorneys who need a practical, solutions-focused mediator to preserve deals while resolving conflict."

Notice the difference.

This is not about limiting your practice.

It is about making it obvious when to use you.

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Reality Check

If someone asked you right now what your ideal case is, could you answer in one sentence?

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Positioning Your Practice

Make it **clear** why **YOU** are the **right neutral** and **easy to choose**.



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Positioning = Clarity + Differentiation

How you:

- **define**
- **present**
- **differentiate**

your practice so the right people immediately understand your value.



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Where Most Neutrals Go Wrong Re: Positioning

This is about:
How you **communicate**
what you do



Generalism

Generalism is not just doing a lot of things. It is describing what you do in a way that makes you sound like everyone else.

Buzzwords

Buzzwords are words that sound good, but do not actually mean anything to the person deciding whether to use you.

Resumé Reliance

This is where most professionals hide. Credentials do matter. But they are not a substitute for **clarity**. **Clarity drives selection.**

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Positioning That Works

- A clearly defined **ideal case**
- Value expressed in terms of **when to use you**
- Messaging that is **consistent and immediately actionable**



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Visibility and Thought Leadership

Staying **top of mind** with the **right people** at the **right time**



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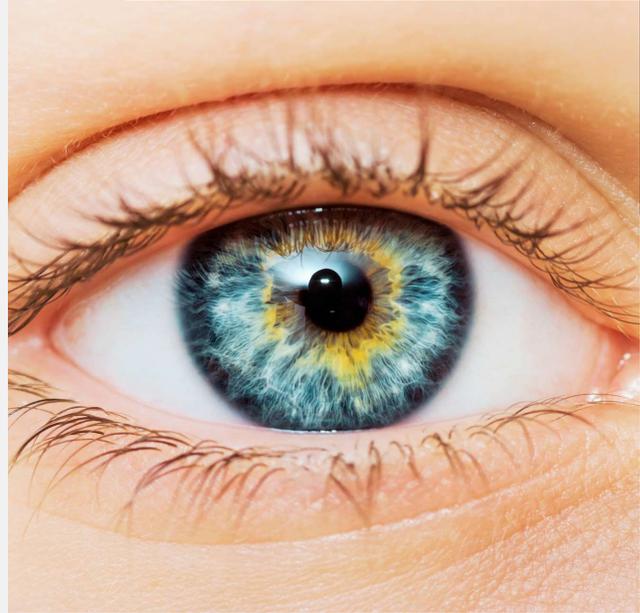
Visibility = Credibility + Consistency

Trust is built before the first call

Visibility builds familiarity →

Familiarity builds trust →

Trust drives selection



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Where Most Neutrals Go Wrong Re: Visibility

This is about building
trust before the first call.



Relying only on referrals

Showing up inconsistently

Trying to be everywhere

Talking about themselves
instead of client needs

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Visibility That Works

- Focus on your **niche**
- Share insights that **educate**
- Be **consistent**, not constant
- **Repurpose** what you create



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Your Secret Weapon: Thought Leadership

Thought leadership is the expression of ideas and expertise in a specific field, where an individual or organization is recognized as a leading authority.

It involves sharing unique insights and perspectives that influence others and drive discussions within that area of expertise



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Bringing It Together

Each of these builds on the other.

If one is missing, the system breaks.



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What to do NOW

It's time to do your HOMEWORK!



<https://susane Guthrie.com/PBCBA>

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More Resources:




THE PRACTICE PLAYBOOK PODCAST
 Helping Lawyers, Mediators, and Legal Entrepreneurs Build Smarter, Stronger, More Profitable Practices


THE FLAT FEE PLAYBOOK
 A Step-by-Step Guide for Professionals to Break Free from Billable Hour Burnout
SUSAN GUTHRIE
 THE PRACTICE PLAYBOOK SERIES


THE THOUGHT LEADERSHIP PLAYBOOK
 How to Get Known, Build Trust, and Grow a Profitable Practice
SUSAN GUTHRIE
 THE PRACTICE PLAYBOOK SERIES


THE BUSINESS PLAN PLAYBOOK
 How to Build a Business Plan that Works for Lawyers, Mediators, and Dispute Resolution Entrepreneurs
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Thank You

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